

**SITTERSON
DOUGHERTY
ASTONE
ESPOSITO**

FRANK FLOOD NIGHT



In the wake of a grueling revolutionary war, the planet Lutheria has declared itself the first completely free planet in human history.

Tasked with the planet's defense is the Freedom Guard. But with the planet's economy reeling from a trade embargo and its fractious populace growing restless the team is forced to respond to increasing hostilities on the surface.

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NET

In the wake of the Interplanetary Development Alliance's embargo, Lutheran orchaleum extraction ground to a halt, with new drilling prohibited, facilities shuttered, and only select sites authorized to meet domestic demand.

After meeting the federal government's orchaleum needs--inclusive of defense--remaining supply (as with other production outputs) was administered by the relevant polis Boule, with further allocation and commodification managed at the local level.

The polis system developed organically out of Lutheria's confederated, Revolution-era municipal administration, with city-states laying claim to their nebulously defined surrounding territories, creating persistent ambiguity regarding the ambit of each.

In consequence, interpolis disputes were distressingly common and, with no higher authority to which to appeal, often proved intractable. Such conflicts were frequently arbitrated by mutually agreed-upon representatives from uninvolved, neutral poleis.

However, when conflicts proved too contentious--such as those involving lucrative production centers--and/or carried a salient risk of violence, the Global Council was forced to deploy the only peacekeeping forces in its remit: the Freedom Guard.



At its founding, Lutheria boasted a mere 6.5 million citizens, a modest figure even for the thinly settled Alliance hinterlands.

This was a function of the relatively recent discovery of orchaleum and the relatively small labor pool required to coax it from the earth.

Freeport

ANY LEGIT MAP SHOWS IT: THE LIBERTY FIELD'S FREEPORT'S.



BUT IF IT WERE DESTROYED AND REBUILT CLOSER TO GRACCHTON...

The planet's sparse and geographically dispersed population--in concert with the Luthieran prioritization of autonomy and autarky--resulted in a deep commitment to and identification with one's polis that was only outweighed by responsibilities to clan and family.

RIDICULOUS. WE NEED ORCHALEUM TO RUN OUR COMBINES.

Gracchton

DO YOU REALIZE HOW MUCH WE STAND TO LOSE FROM THIS DELAY?



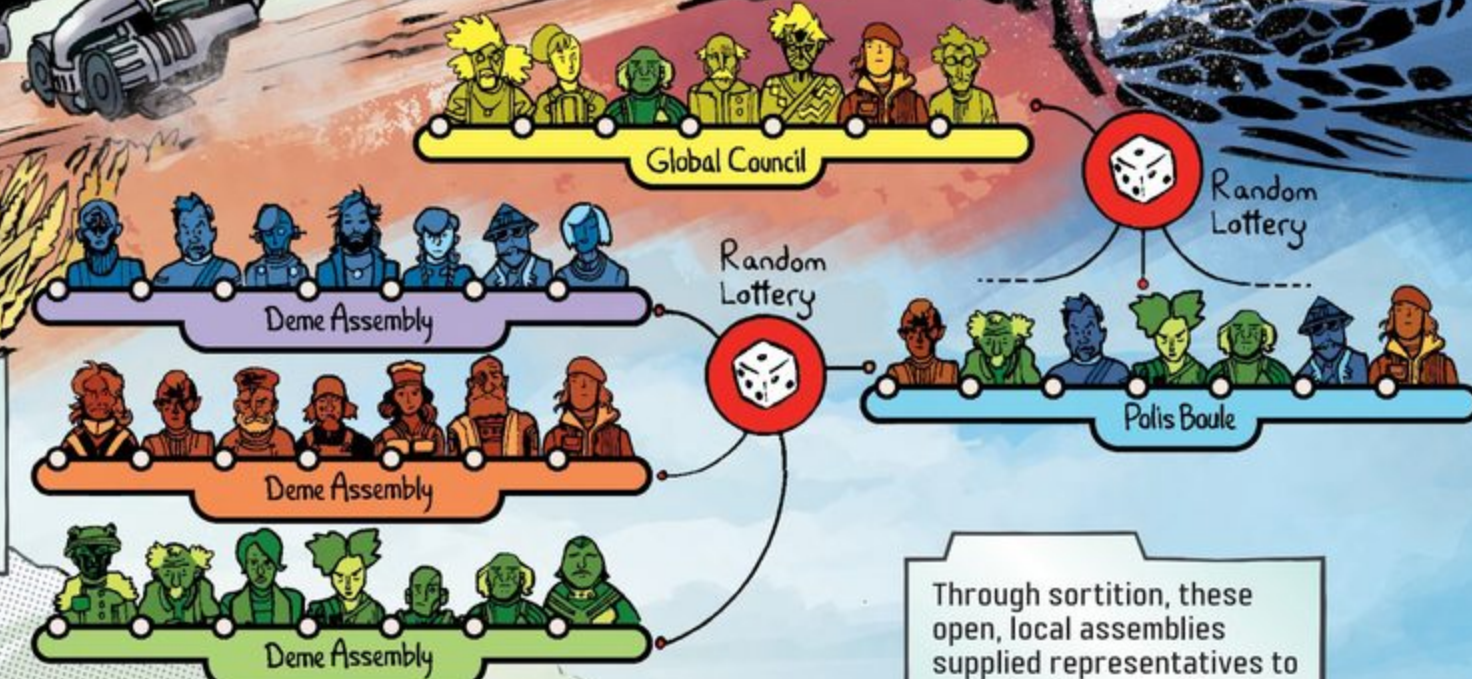
DOES IT REMIND YOU OF DUMUZID?

EVERYTHING REMINDS ME OF DUMUZID.

PEOPLE ARE STARVING AND YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT PROFIT?!

I'M WORRIED ABOUT PROVIDING FOR MY PEOPLE! FOR GRACCHTON!

The polis system centered decentralization, replacing the cumbersome Regional Assemblies with those built around polis subdivisions, demes.



Through sortition, these open, local assemblies supplied representatives to polis Boules and, ultimately, the Global Council.

However, despite best efforts at creating a universal, truly egalitarian government, two demographics remained outside of the polis structure: The inhabitants of Lutheria's unexplored southern hemisphere and the original inhabitants of the northern.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



BLAST PROFILE ANALYSIS PRECLUDES FAULTY OR MALFUNCTIONING COMPONENTS AS INITIATING FACTORS.

DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO MASK IT. THEY WERE SENDING A MESSAGE.

KNEW WHAT THEY WERE DOING TOO; DEMOLISHED THE ARTIFICIAL LIFT SYSTEM.

ALL THOSE IDA ASSEMBLIES... GOT TO BE REBUILT FROM SCRATCH.

ARE THEY--?

CAPRIN.



The United Surroko, which played such an integral role in the Lutheran Revolution, was a historical aberration for the Surroko people, whose extensive oral history evinced a stasiotic, fractious existence, between smaller tribal units as well as within them.



YOUR WAR CHIEF MADE HIS DECISION.

AND HIS HEAD RIDER HAS A RIGHT TO SPEAK ON IT.

While Surroko War Chiefs were chosen by consensus, they remained susceptible to challenges. Ostensibly, duels could be initiated by any adult, male tribal member but, in practice, they came only from those confident in their ability to form a viable coalition.



Governed by ritual, bound by tradition, duels were contested with the kuttuks and fought to the death, in acknowledgement that leaving a bested warrior alive was as foolish as it was cruel, condemning the vanquished to live on, scheming, with their shame.

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY ARE. WHY THEY'RE HERE. THEIR SQUABBLES DON'T CONCERN US.

THE MOUNTAINS WEEP TO SEE YOU DECEIVED BY THEIR AGENT.



SO YOU'D HAVE US FIGHT THEM BOTH?

YOU'RE BEING RIDICULOUS, GART.





AND YOU'RE BEING NAIVE, ETH. SO WE HELP THEM WIN...WHAT THEN?

WILL THEY STOP BLEEDING OUR MOUNTAINS?

Whether chosen by consensus or combat, a War Chief's rule was undergirded by his coalition, the bonds of which were forged and strengthened through the selection of advisors and appointment of key tribal roles including Head Rider and Flametender.

IT'S MORE COMPLEX THAN THAT. THE COALITION HAS--



SEE? THE INVADER WILL SAY ANYTHING TO TRICK THE STUPID, SAVAGE BLUES.

WE KNOW WHO HE WORKS FOR, WHO HIS FATHER IS, AND YET--

GART.



THE DECISION HAS BEEN MADE.



Though not formally exiled, the supporters of a defeated combatant--whether challenger or incumbent--typically seceded. While the formation of new tribes was not unusual, bereft of their leader, absorption by former rivals was the more frequent outcome.

This seemingly simple act is emblematic of the Surroko's three sacred freedoms, which generated such friction with Alliance and Lutheran governments alike: The freedom to disobey, the freedom of movement, and the freedom to create new social structures.



I AM WAR CHIEF OF THE UNITED SURROKO.

KEEN, YOU'RE NOT--

GARTNAIT...



...DO YOU CHALLENGE ME?

I...



NO, WAR CHIEF.



The Aegis was home to not only the much-lauded Freedom Guard, but a civilian corps of significantly less cachet.

IS THIS WHY WE FOUGHT A WAR, ANI?



FOR MY ONLY DAUGHTER TO BECOME A SERVANT?

These no-less-essential personnel were responsible for a broad array of support, including but not limited to facilities maintenance and culinary detail.

DAD.

I'M CONTRIBUTING TO LUTHERIAN SECURITY. SAME AS YOU.

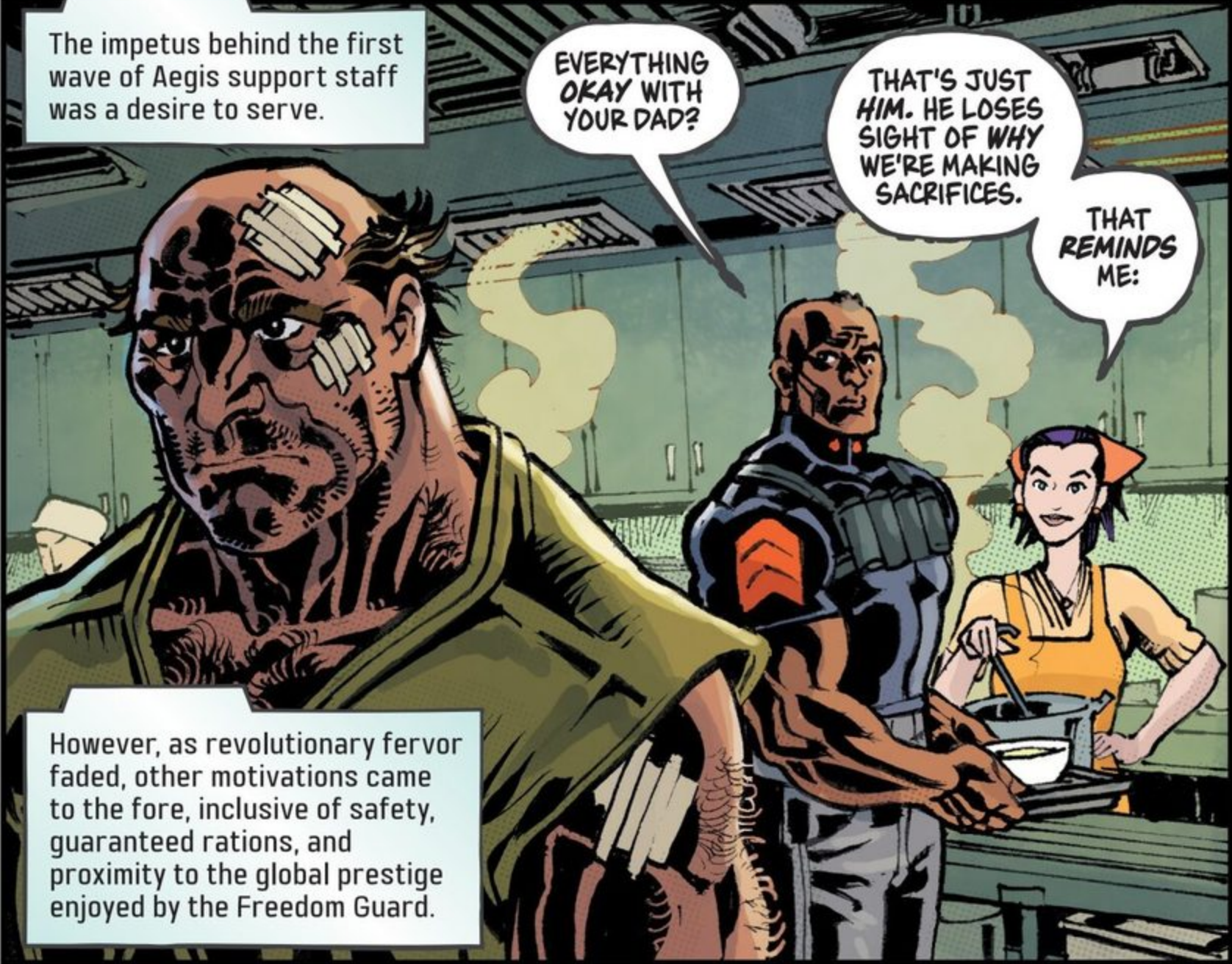


OH! SORRY, MOOKIE. ME AND MY DAD'S SCHEDULES NEVER LINE UP.

DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT ANGLING FOR GUARD RATIONS.

IT'S NO PROBLEM, JOSEF, REALLY--

I KNOW YOUR MEALS ARE A MATTER OF LUTHERIAN SECURITY.



The impetus behind the first wave of Aegis support staff was a desire to serve.

EVERYTHING OKAY WITH YOUR DAD?

THAT'S JUST HIM. HE LOSES SIGHT OF WHY WE'RE MAKING SACRIFICES.

THAT REMINDS ME:

However, as revolutionary fervor faded, other motivations came to the fore, inclusive of safety, guaranteed rations, and proximity to the global prestige enjoyed by the Freedom Guard.



DO YOU EVER GET TO LISTEN TO VICTOR SPEAK?



I DON'T NEED TO SEE THE FUTURE TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:



LUTHERIA IS CRUSHED. BY ALLIANCE, EMPIRE OR BOTH.

THE QUADROS WANTED TO HELP LUTHERIA; IT IS WHY THEY WILL SEND ME.

THE UNIVERSE *SPINS*.

FURTHER-AND-FURTHER,

ON-AND-ON,

FASTER-AND-FASTER,

THE SPIRAL *SPREADS*,

ROUND-AND-ROUND,

QUADROS KNEW

WHERE IT ENDS:

DEATH.

FATE. DESTINY. A *SENTENCE*.

THE HIVE SAW THE WAY *FREE*:

LUTHERIA.

Remorseful
Reluctant

Resigned
Obedient

Serene
Detached

Confused
Excited



BUT WE CANNOT HELP UNTIL WE KNOW THAT WE DID HELP.

DID YOU SEE?

NO. I DON'T. WHY DID THEY SEND YOU IF YOU CAN'T ACTUALLY DO ANYTHING?

GLORIA.

HOW CAN WE COMMIT...

...WHEN YOU STILL DO NOT?

Liberty Orcha Field

The United Surroko's independence and autonomy were first enshrined as prerequisites for joining the Revolutionary Coalition. Soon after Lutheria's founding, however, this arrangement--rife with irreconcilable complexities--proved itself invidious.

VENTURING INTO THE MOUNTAINS PRESENTS ADDITIONAL JURISDICTIONAL COMPLICATIONS.

THE COUNCIL EXTENDED SOVEREIGNTY FOR INDEPENDENT INDIGENOUS GROUPS.

THAT "FOR NOW" IS ALWAYS IMPLIED, AIN'T IT?

IT'S RIGHT AND GOOD TO SHARE WITH COMPANERES...

...BUT GUIDING INVA--
...GUIDING YOU IS FORBIDDEN.

Beyond the obvious and severe conflicts created by any imbrication of discrete authorities, difficulties in the Lutheran context were heightened on account of the Surroko conception of liberty, which included the freedom to leave or join societies at will.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS ARE WHY WE BROUGHT YOU!

AND WHY'D WE BRING YOU? FOR ALL THAT HOT AIR TO KEEP US WARM?

The high mobility of the Surroko people--on micro and macro levels--in concert with the tendency for independent groups to settle in remote, frequently inaccessible territories, further convoluted questions of Surroko population, both within poleis and without.

GO. TELL THEM THEIR WAR CHIEF IS HERE.

JUST STAY QUIET, OKAY? SURROKO CULTURE IS COMPLEX.

WE'RE ALL VERY IMPRESSED BY YOUR DEGREE, VICTOR.

This lack of clarity around indigenous populations was a continuation of Alliance rule, under which anthropology--like all manner of study--was encouraged only when profitable, which, in the Surroko context, entailed little beyond the negotiation of land rights.

I'LL TAKE POINT; I KNOW THESE MOUNTAINS.

GARTNAIT. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.

SINCE WE RETURNED ETHNE TO THE MOUNTAINS.

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE. BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE:

WE DO NOT SUBMIT TO THE INVADERS' LAW.



DR. TAKAHOUN
IS SO FORMAL.
EVERYONE JUST
CALLS ME
"SHO."



SIMILARLY:
"BASIL."

"DR." SEEMS...
INAPPROPRIATE
FOR MY NEW
ROLE.



OF COURSE,
BASIL. THANK
YOU.

READING ABOUT
YOUR WORK...IT'S
WHAT BROUGHT ME
TO LUTHERIA.

WE CAN ALL
DO SO MUCH
MORE WITH
OUR GIFTS.



I'M AFRAID
MY "GIFTS" HAVE
MORE TO DO WITH
BLOWING PEOPLE
APART THAN PUTTING
THEM BACK
TOGETHER.

BUT IF YOU
STRUGGLE TO
FIND ANYTHING,
YOU CERTAINLY
WON'T MISS
ME...



...YOUR
MEDICAL BAY
IS ONE OF TWO
PLACES IN THE
AEGIS WITH
REINFORCED
STOOLS.



HOWDY,
HORA! GOT
A MINUTE?



I'M IN NEED
OF SOME,
WHADDYACALLIT...
GUIDANCE.



PHIL! OF
COURSE, I'M
HAPPY TO HELP.
BUT...

MY
QUARTERS ARE
A MESS. I'LL
GET MY THINGS
AND WE CAN GO
TO YOURS?



IT'S ACTUALLY
A...HIGHER-LEVEL
ISSUE. REAL SERIOUS
STUFF. SO, I
FIGURED...

DEVOUT
AS YOU ARE,
YOU MUST HAVE
A WAY TO GET IN
TOUCH WITH
CHURCH BRASS,
YEAH?



I'D
ACTUALLY
LIKE SOME
PRIVACY. IN
FACT...

I...YES, OF
COURSE. COME
IN--QUICKLY--
AND I'LL SHOW
YOU--



...MAYBE YOU
SHOULD STAND
GUARD.



WOULD HATE
FOR ANY OF
OUR SECRETS
TO GET OUT.



AS...
AS THE
CREATOR
WILLS IT.



I'VE
MADE MY
DECISION.

YOU
HAVE NO
AUTHORITY
HERE.

WE JUST WANT
TO TALK. LOOK
AROUND A BIT.

YOU MEAN TO
INTERROGATE
MY PEOPLE.
ACCUSE THEM.
INVADE THEIR
PRIVACY.

ALL BECAUSE
IT'S SUDDENLY A
BIT TOUGHER TO
BLEED OUR
MOUNTAINS.

OH,
COME
ON!



WE KNOW YOU
DID IT! FOLKS'RE
GONNA STARVE!
KIDS!



YOU BLEW UP
AN ORCHA SITE!
YOU AIN'T THE
GOOD--

FWEHA!



YOU
NEED
TO--



WHO DO
YOU--

FWEHA.



QUIET.

NOW.



YOUR
INVADER DOG
COULD USE A
MUZZLE.



DO SURROKO NO
LONGER HONOR
THEIR WOMEN?



SHE AIN'T
SURROKO. AND
NEITHER ARE
YOU.

YOU
SHAME
US. YOU
SHAME
ETHNE.



I AM WAR
CHIEF--



AND I
CHALLENGE
YOU.



Freedom can't be *granted*.
Can you receive what's
already yours?
But it's too often given away:
By cowards. By servants.
By *pets*.

I *know* freedom.
To roam. To create. To *live*.
The *old ways* guard it
because freedom is life.
And if freedom is life then what
is its *absence*?

Nothing *ever* changes.



Freedom is *life* and all it contains.
And the *old* ways are just that.
The *world* grown larger.
And us ever *smaller*.

The *truth* has changed.
For the Surroko to *survive*,
we must change *with* it.

If freedom is life, then
what is *death*?





IT'S ABSURD. THEY SHIPPED US ACROSS THE GALAXY BUT WON'T LET ME DO ANYTHING.

ALL BECAUSE OF A BUNCH OF SILLY COGGER SUPERSTITION.



I THOUGHT THERE WERE SAFETY CONCERNS?

THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY TO SHUT DOWN DISCUSSION.

NO ONE KNOWS WHETHER IT'S DANGEROUS BECAUSE THEY PROHIBIT THE RESEARCH.

IT'S BAD ENOUGH WHAT I'M HELPING UNIVERSAL POWER DO.



DRAINING 'AIDES, IMPOVERISHING ITS PEOPLE...

I KNOW: IT'S WHAT THE ALLIANCE--WHAT EVERYTHING--IS PREDICATED ON.



BUT I THOUGHT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REAL RESEARCH, TO DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT COULD...

...MAKE UP FOR IT? THAT SOUNDS AWFUL.

BUT THE WORST PART IS I DON'T EVEN GET TO FIND OUT.



THEN QUIT. WE CAN GO HOME.

BASIL, WE CAN'T AFFORD FOR ME TO QUIT.

REPAYMENT OBLIGATIONS, EARLY TERMINATION FEES, NOT TO MENTION OUR TICKETS BACK...



Despite maintaining hegemonic status in most other domains, the Alliance's cultural influence was severely constrained by the staggering expense of interstellar shipping and the significant divergences in technological integration and local preferences.

Predictably, the nature of locally produced cultural artifacts varied across worlds, ranging from the lavishly produced, technologically intensive entertainments of wealthier member planets to the inexpensive printed works eagerly devoured on then-'Aides.



PLUS: UNIVERSAL POWER WILL MAKE SURE I NEVER WORK AGAIN.

EVERYTHING WILL HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING. I'LL HAVE NOTHING.

KATJA. MY LOVE...



...YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE ME.

ALL OF ME.



WITH THE MOUNTAINS AS WITNESS...

...MAY THIS DUEL COMMEN--

oooooooo

ktakt

SLASH

whiff

Surroko caprin riders possessed a cultural significance belied by their relative scarcity. Particularly amid Lutheria's vertiginous mountains, the exceptional agility of their mounts rendered riders indispensable to military operations, as scouts as well as shock troops.

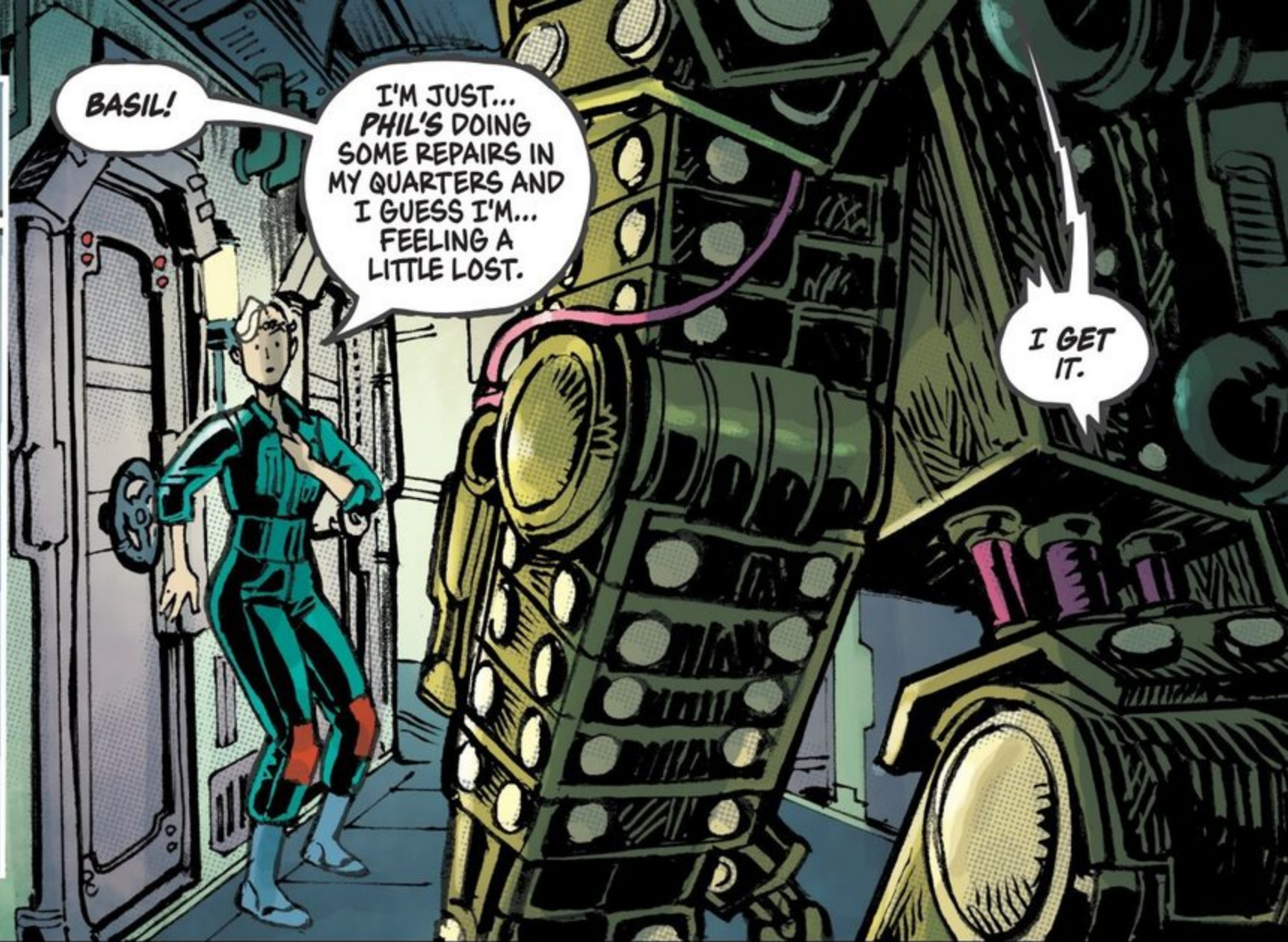


Athletic Surroko of slight build were selected in childhood and subjected to extensive training in riding, survival, and combat. For these elite cavalry units, their smaller stature became an asset, especially in concert with their impressive speed and superior training.



HORA?

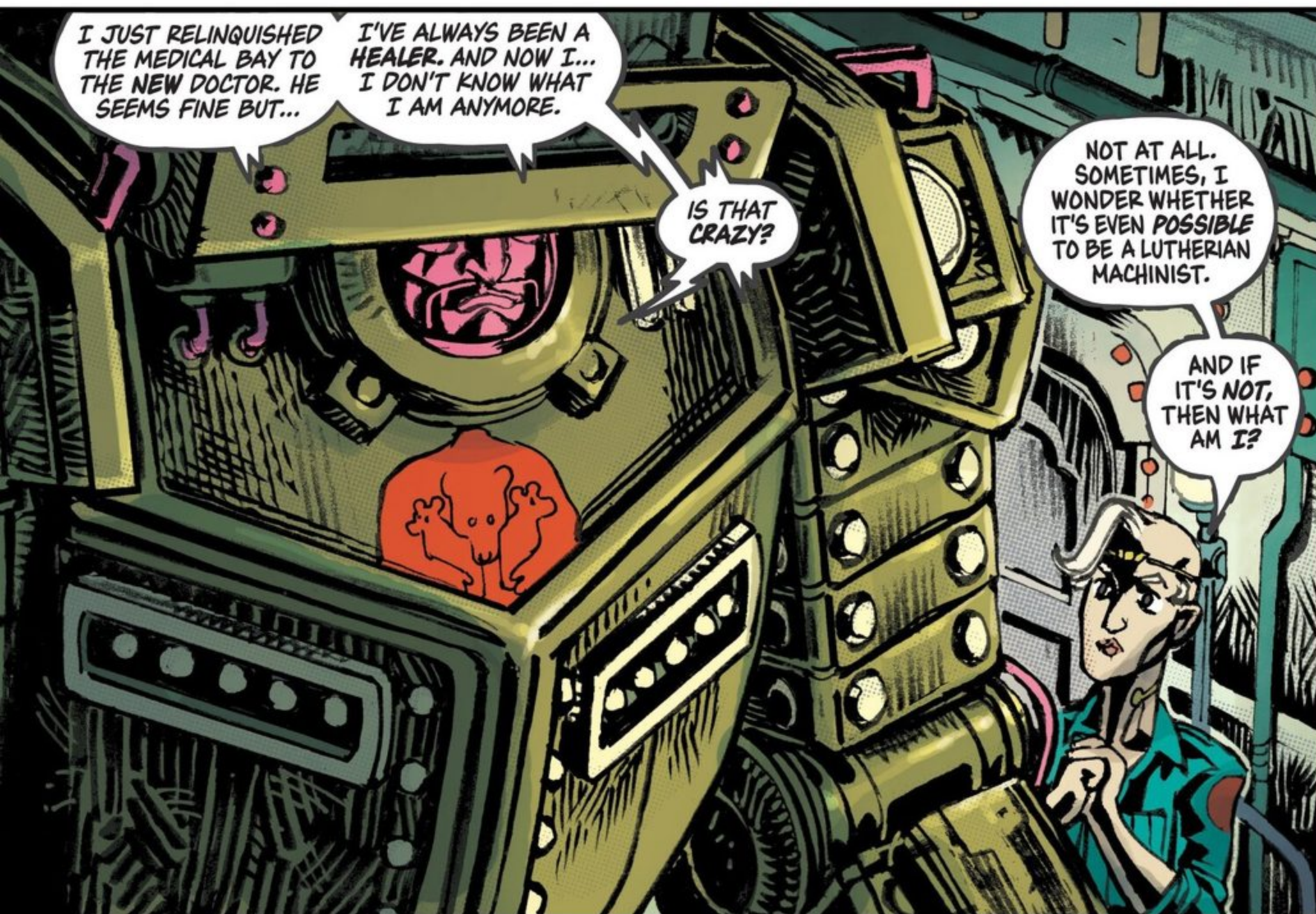
ARE YOU
OKAY?



BASIL!

I'M JUST...
PHIL'S DOING
SOME REPAIRS IN
MY QUARTERS AND
I GUESS I'M...
FEELING A
LITTLE LOST.

I GET
IT.



I JUST RELINQUISHED
THE MEDICAL BAY TO
THE NEW DOCTOR. HE
SEEMS FINE BUT...

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A
HEALER. AND NOW I...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT
I AM ANYMORE.

IS THAT
CRAZY?

NOT AT ALL.
SOMETIMES, I
WONDER WHETHER
IT'S EVEN POSSIBLE
TO BE A LUTHERIAN
MACHINIST.

AND IF
IT'S NOT,
THEN WHAT
AM I?



YOU
KNOW...

I USED TO
JOURNAL WHEN
I FELT CONFUSED.
OR LOST. HAVE
YOU EVER?



NO...
WRITING TO
MYSELF ALWAYS
SEEMED SO SELF-
INDULGENT.

WHAT
ABOUT A
LETTER
THEN?

I
DON'T HAVE
ANYONE TO
WRITE TO.

OH,
BASIL...

...YOU
HAVE
ME.



nnngggg

POK!

SLASH SLASH

GRAAAAA

ASK FOR...
HEFH...MERCY,
GART...

I WILL
GIVE IT...
HEFH...IF
YOU ASK.

THOU

ENNGHE

YOU
ARE WAR
CHIEF.

YOU
CANNOT
AFFORD
MERCY.



IN KEEPING
WITH THE OLD
WAYS...

...YOUR
ALL-SEASON
WAR CHIEF
COMMANDS
HIS TRIBE:

POSSESSION
LOOMS. BY YOUR
RESENTMENT, YOUR
VENGEANCE, BY
THE OLD WAYS.

GO. JOIN
A POLIS OR
FORM YOUR OWN.
BUT LEAVE THE
MOUNTAINS TO
OUR GHOSTS.

WE ARE STILL
SURROKO, BORN OF
THE MOUNTAINS.



BUT NOW
WE ARE ALSO
LUTHERIAN.



KEEN,
I...

I DIDN'T
UNDERSTAND--

GART
KNEW WHAT
HE WAS
LOOKING
FOR.

AND
ONE WAY OR
ANOTHER...HE
WAS GOING TO
FIND IT.

NOTHING EVER
CHANGES.

*To be
continued.*

THE HEPHACIAN ISLANDS: LUTHERIA'S SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

BY DR. ALDOUS FOYROUSHI

Though the Lutheran government purported to represent the planet in its entirety, this claim carried with it a central irony: The Lutheran government's presence was limited to the planet's Northern Hemisphere. There, Lutheria had been built upon the ruins of Interplanetary Development Alliance rule, which—in keeping with Alliance priorities and the Planetary Specialization Doctrine—extended no further than Lutheria's two primary northern continents and their confirmed orchaleum reservoirs.

These dual continents—dubbed Nahul and Sahad by early Alliance explorers—dominate the Northern Hemisphere, sharing a cool, dry, and blustery climatic regime. This effect is further amplified by the continents' extensive mountain ranges, another effect of the tectonic activity that not only split the Northern Hemisphere's original megacontinent in twain, but catalyzed the creation of the planet's extensive networks of volcanic islands to the south.

Despite their rich, volcanic soil, the Hephacian Islands remained largely unexplored following the Rediscovery of Lutheria—then known as 'Aides—in 087. This lack of interest in such fertile ground came on account of a confluence of factors: the relatively small amount of dry land; the exorbitant cost of clearing ancient forests; and, most significantly, the close proximity of the incipient agricultural powerhouse Dumuzid.

Nonetheless, even without formal or fiscal endorsement or encouragement, adventurism took its hold on a group of early pioneers, the Phannov Party, who identified the island Apsitia—large by Hephacian standards—as most likely to yield them wealth and renown. They were not heard from again.

Owing to the density of not only Apsitia's forest canopies but the vegetation upon the ground, aerial search teams were impracticable, necessitating that search teams proceed on foot. Those that managed to return did so bearing reports of forbidding caves and nocturnally active arboreal life but no recorded sightings of missing personnel. Once merely exotic in Alliance eyes, the Hephacian Islands had become dangerous and enigmatic, such that Alliance marine expeditions were eager to descend upon Apsitia and become the first to identify and neutralize the mysterious threat preying upon Alliance citizens.

These military expeditions were, initially, fruitless and, as a result, grew more aggressive in their tactics. It was in the course of defoliating Apsitia's dense vegetation that a squad of marines discovered a small band of the Hephacian Islands' indigenous inhabitants. Arboreal, nocturnal, and pre-industrial but distinctly human, the Hephacians shared the blue skin of the Surroko and were later determined—through methods ethnographic and linguistic—to be a fission group of their cousins to the north.



The blue skin shared with the Surroko was a boon to the Hephacians, who, over the course of nocturnal millennia, evolved enhanced scotopic vision capabilities.



Alliance citizens were eager to gaze upon Weera Garn's blue skin, elongated limbs, indigenous clothing, and the custom eyewear shielding her photosensitive eyes.

Despite a lack of evidence tying the Hephacians to the missing explorers, they were summarily executed.

With Alliance citizens still missing and a likely scapegoat identified, security forces—including but not limited to official military units—swarmed to not just Aspitia, but the rest of the extensive Hephacian islands, quickly discovering that the indigenous inhabitants were also, by turns, troglodytic, making their homes deep within the islands' labyrinthine tunnels and cave systems. These forces acted without oversight or compunction and were met with a ferocious defense, comprising ruthless, nocturnal assaults from the jungle canopy and deadly subterranean traps of shocking complexity. The Hephacian resistance, however, only succeeded in encouraging and justifying the Alliance response, which possessed all the inhuman cruelty that too often accompanied the Alliance's early Rediscovery efforts.

When the Hephacian genocide finally came to a long-overdue end, it was not due to the institution of the Alliance Guidelines on Dispersion Populations in 230 but, rather—as so many Alliance decisions—due largely to economic concerns. As the moral urgency of revenge receded into the murky past, the expense of ethnically cleansing a profoundly reclusive and resourceful nocturnal people too far outweighed the negligible benefits of further exploration.

The Guidelines represented a noble desire to come to grips with the shameful

history of early, unconstrained Rediscovery efforts, including concessions to affected indigenous populations. Most often, these overlapped with the technological boons outlined in the Rediscovery Protocols, particularly the provision of Kirkardi Engines and corporate investment, both of which carried with them the supplemental benefit of industrial development and reliance upon the Alliance. The Hephacian Islands, however—long since forged, under duress, into a loose confederacy—declined Alliance technological wonders in favor of a pair of simple requests. The first: for one of their own to make an expedition to the heart of the Alliance.

At only 23 standard Alliance years old, Weerahochtlan Garn-Tern-Ka, known broadly as Weera Garn, had lived her entire life under Alliance assault. A brilliant linguist with a prodigious memory, Garn was chosen by her people to be not merely an ambassador but a field researcher intended to report back to her people, scattered across atolls and archipelagos, caves and trees. Though the stated purpose of the journey was educational, her visit to the charter worlds soon adopted the trappings of spectacle, with Alliance citizens eager to lay eyes upon one of the enigmatic and fearsome Hephacian race.

After her two-year tour of the Alliance charter worlds had concluded, Weera Garn was ferried back to her people in 'Aides' Southern Hemisphere. At the time, her handlers hoped that this was the beginning of a thaw in the Alliance's understandably icy relationship with the Hephacian people. Yet, after that by-all-accounts brilliant mind had absorbed everything it could about Alliance society, Weera Garn formalized and reiterated the Hephacians' second request: To be left in isolation.

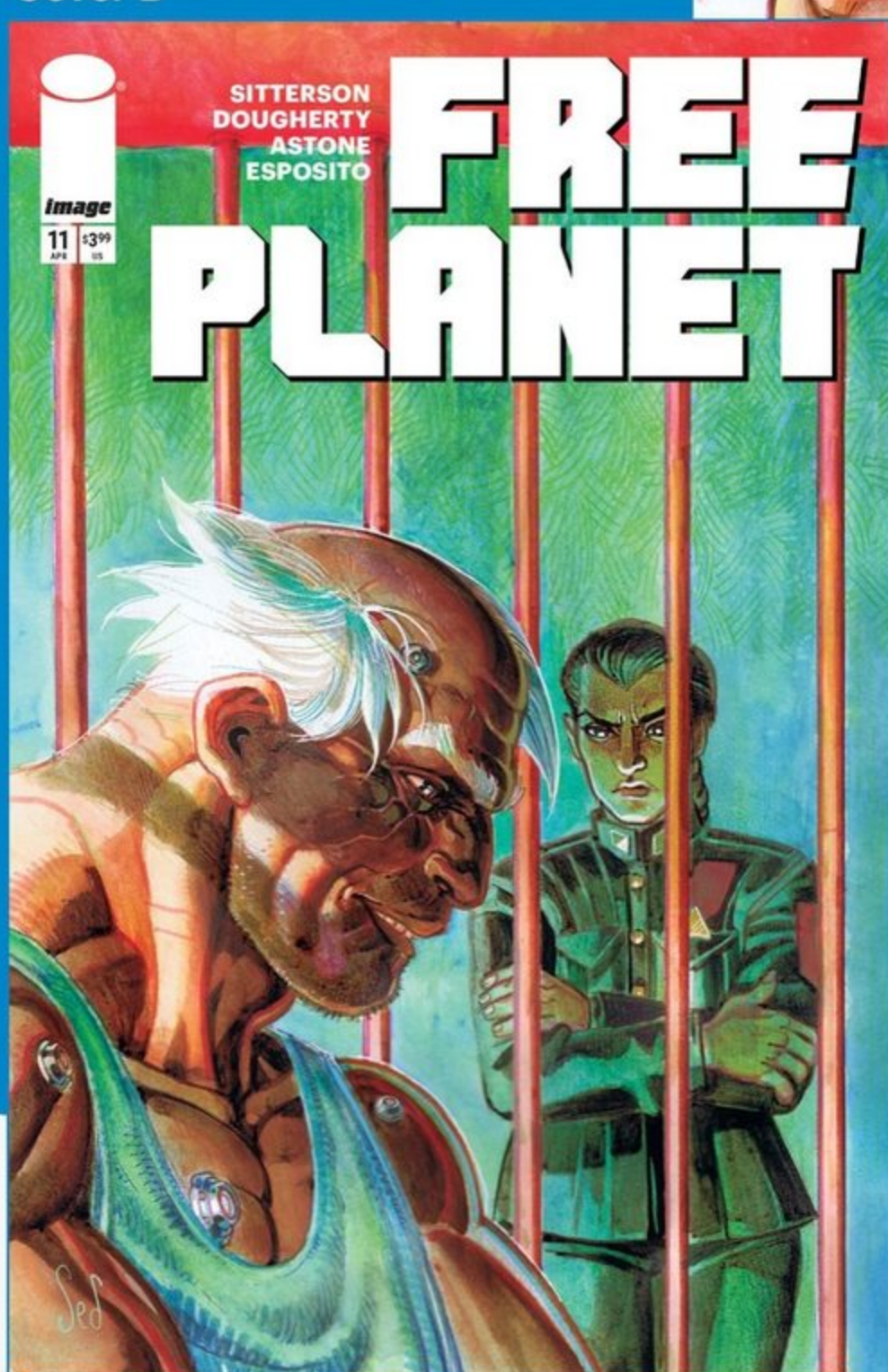
Weera Garn's curt, affectless farewell was the final contact between the Alliance and any of the Hephacian Islands.

SUBMIT QUESTIONS
regarding Lutheran history to
DrAldousFoyroushi@AtlantisStillSunk.com

NEXT ISSUE



Cover A



Cover B

We're free to choose how it is that we change, grow and improve.

A geopolitical
space opera by
AUBREY SITTERSON
and **JED DOUGHERTY**

FREE PLANET

**VOL
1**

"Brings shades of the
cosmic imagination of Jack
Vance, Jack Kirby, and
Samuel Delany and Howard
Chaykin's great lost *Empire*."

—**Jonathan Lethem**
(*The Fortress of Solitude*,
Motherless Brooklyn)

"Rich, intricate
worldbuilding that
is equal parts *Dune*,
Claremont and
Saga while being
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possessed with a density of
vision that shames most any
other attempt at legitimate
space opera in comics."

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AVAILABLE NOW

MARCH AT IMAGE



Doug Wagner and Daniel Hillyard, the team behind *Plastic* and *I Was a High School Serial Killer*, return to explore their bloody muse in ***Narco #1***. Here, a shy guy has to try and solve a murder while suffering that form of narcolepsy those goats have. You know the one – where they pass out when they’re over-excited. Suffice to say, that makes detective-ing tricky. *Narco* shows the team continuing to dig into their grounded, threatening yet playful approach.



Spoilers for ***Tigress Island*** by Patrick Kindlon (*Gehenna*) and EPHK (*Harpy*): in the first issue, there’s no tigers. Big disappointment for the big stripy-feline fans, but for those looking for a pop-vibes story of burned-out actresses taken under duress by a very rich bastard to an island for a really bad time, you’re sorted. Very much fuelled by exploitation energies with strong, clear storytelling. Perhaps they’ll be tigers in #2? I love tigers.



In ***Blood Squad Seven Yearbook*** . . . oh, take it away Joe Casey! “If you like your 1990s superheroes deconstructed in a big way... this is the series for you, and *Yearbook #1* is the over-sized culmination of the story we’ve been setting up. It’s a modern-day look at the concept of superheroics and it’s got all of the spectacle and the gravitas you’d want and expect. Paul Fry’s art nails it in every panel and we’re both really proud of the work.”



Hmm. Creators writing about themselves may be a theme. Skybound release ***Super Creepshow #1***, a superheroic expansion to the classic horror anthology. And [er] I wrote one of the stories. But Ryan North wrote the other, and the day I can’t wholeheartedly rave about Ryan being smart and petrifying is the day I give this up. Which it may be. I am famously lazy. Rossi Gifford and Derek Charm kill [literally] on art in both stories, mixing ironic period charm with real creep.



And this will be the last This Month at Image for a while, as ***The Power Fantasy*** is on a break [three trades now available for those who haven’t yet tried this critically-acclaimed masterpiece, etc]. We’ll be back late 2026, so hopefully I’ll be plugging some more books then. Until that point, you’re on your own. Support Image books. They’ll make you happy, or failing that, it’ll make creators happy, which isn’t nothing, right?

Kieron Gillen writes ***The Power Fantasy*** and ***DIE: Loaded***.

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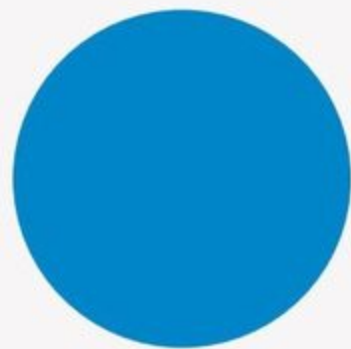
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